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# **EXECUTIVE BRIEFINGS & PRESENTATIONS BEST PRACTICES HANDBOOK**

*A step by step process and guide to making  
powerful presentations to colleagues and the press  
For Government & Corporate Managers and Leaders*

**Sub-Title: “Dry Martini, Bitte”**

**By**

**J. Robert Parkinson & Don Philpott**



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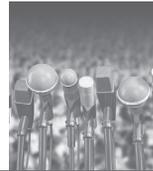
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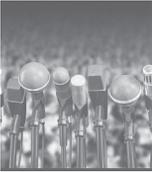
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## Symbols

Throughout this book you will see a number of icons displayed in the margins. The icons are there to help you as you work through the Five Step process. Each icon acts as an advisory – for instance alerting you to things that you must always do or should never do. The icons used are:



**Must Do** This is something that you must always do



**No No** This is something you should never do



**Tips** Really useful tips



**Remember** Points to bear in mind



**Checklist** Have you checked off or answered everything on this list?



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Today's successful company executive, politician or public official, will have mastered the art of communication. Unfortunately, he or she is a minority. It is an elite minority - but still a minority.

However, that elite band of communicators is growing in number because the skills they possess can be learned and taught. That is what this book is all about.

## **A STORY**

This book is about effective communication so let me explain this title by relating a true story.

A few years ago, my wife and I were conducting a communication seminar in Cologne, Germany. Our corporate host, Derk, and his wife took us to dinner at the Belgian House. When the Turkish waiter came to the table to take drink orders, each of the ladies ordered a glass of wine, Derk ordered a beer, and I asked for a martini.

I don't like the gin diluted by other spirits, so I said emphatically. "Dry! Dry martini, bitte (Demonstrating a little bit of my knowledge of German)

The waiter looked at me strangely for a brief moment. That seemed unusual, and he went off for the drinks.

When he returned, he placed a glass of wine on front of my wife, another one in front of the other lady, and a stein of beer in front of Derk.

When he came to me, he put down a martini, then a second martini, and finally a third martini.

He gave me three martinis!

It took only a nano-second to figure out what had happened.

He gave me exactly what he heard me order. He knew the words, but they meant something different to him.

I said, "Dry martini, bitte."

He heard, "Drei martini, bitte"

In German, the word "dry" means, "three". (Ein, zwei, drei means 1, 2, 3)



He heard the spoken word clearly, but his interpretation was very different from what I intended.

I think of that waiter often, and I relive that moment because it is such a powerful example of a communication breakdown.

As you go through this book, remember this story and how important it is for all of us to be sure our audiences interpret our messages exactly as we intended them.



Tips

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A misinterpretation can be funny, or it can be disastrous.

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## **THE GAME PLAN**

This book is divided into specific sections. Here's why.

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There are many steps suggested for you to try. But, it is difficult for anyone to change numerous habits and behaviors all at once. If you try to do too much at one time you'll become frustrated and give up. I don't want you to give up before you become comfortable with these suggestions.

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Tips

So here is the recommendation. Pick one of these topics - any one - and work on it for as long as necessary. Practice the suggestions for a week, a month, or more until they become easy and comfortable. Then move on to another topic and work on that one for a month.

By the time you have worked your way through the book you will have developed an entirely new set of skills you don't have right now. And, you'll be able to imprint your own style on all of these suggestions, too. That's a very important concept. You'll be able to modify these ideas so they reflect "you".

We all learned to write using the same model letters above the blackboard in our classrooms. Then we developed our own unique style.

This is the same idea. Use the model, then make it your own.

- There isn't just one way to do anything. There are many variations, but models are important. This book is a set of models.
- Of course, you can take as much or as little time as you need to cover the material, but give yourself time to practice.
- Don't rush it. Change takes time.

I put the "presentation" section first for three reasons.

First, everyone starts a book at the very beginning. In fact, most books are written so you have to do it that way. You'll probably read this first chapter first.

Second, the skills and techniques covered in the first chapter apply to the content of many of the other chapters. The content of the first chapter, therefore, can serve as a good foundation.

Third, we have to start someplace, and this seemed to be as good a place as any other.

Read on. Try the skills. Practice the techniques.



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## **PRESENTATIONS**

### *Setting the Stage*

I'm pleased to tell you that the status of our company is strong, and with the strategies you have in place, it will become even stronger as you move through this next year.

Today I'll show you how to develop presentation materials that will support your ideas as you want to display them—not as some unknown software developer thinks you should show them.

Both of these sentences would probably attract the attention of an audience from the very start of a talk.

Both would also preview the messages that would follow.

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I borrowed a line from the automotive manufacturers who describe good performance in terms of going from a standing start to 60 miles per hour. A good presenter will move his audience from a standing start to complete involvement in the talk in one sentence.



Both of the example sentences above would move the speaker from a full stop position before the presentation started to cruise speed for the remainder of the talk.

The speaker would go “From Zero to Sixty in One Sentence!”

Many of us have said, or have heard others say, “I’m a little nervous when I start, but after a few minutes I’m fine.”

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At first glance that might seem appropriate, but there is an inherent problem with such thinking. If it takes a couple of minutes for a speaker to start to do well, it means for the first two minutes he is not doing his best.



He is presenting a poor image at the very start of his talk!

Since this is the first image his audience receives, he must now overcome that negative before he has the audience with him. That makes his job even harder than he thought it would be before he began. Without a strategy it will take a long time for him to get to “Sixty”

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Every time you speak or write, other people judge you. And that judging begins with the first sentence you deliver.

